

EPISODE 158

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I continue to run and I get around mile 23, and I'm struggling. I'm struggling to stay on my feet. I'm moving at a slower pace. The voices are getting to me. I got this little angel and devil on my shoulders. I call it my heart and my head. My head is like, "Yo, the pain will go away. You just get your big ass on this bus." My heart is like, "No, you got to keep going. You want to be able to get the race medal and call yourself a marathoner." I'm battling with that. Then you got this outside experience of, "Hey, big man. Come get on the bus."

All of this comes to a head, to about mile 25, less than a mile away from the finish line. Then he comes again and he's like, "Come on, man. Get on this bus." I'm like, "Yo, why are you telling me to get on this bus? I'm less than a mile away. Leave me the fuck alone." He says something along the lines of, "I can't help that you're fat and slow. I'm trying to help your big ass out."

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:01:30] LW: Hello friends and welcome back to the Light Watkins Show, where I interview ordinary folks just like you and me, who've taken extraordinary leaps of faith in the direction of their path, their purpose, or what they've identified with as their mission. In doing so, they've been able to positively impact and inspire the lives of many other people who've either heard about their story, or who've witnessed them in action, or who've directly benefited from their work.

This week on the show, I'm back in conversation with Slow AF Run Club founder, Martinus Evans. You may recall from back in episode 90, I had Martinus on to talk about his journey of

going from an overweight couch potato to a marathon runner, and how he went to go see his doctor because he was experiencing hip pain. Without doing any evaluation, the doctor told him that his hip was hurting because he was fat. When Martinus told the doctor that he was going to run a marathon, the doctor laughed at him and told him that if he tried to run a marathon, he was going to die.

Martinus took this as a challenge. He stormed out of the doctor's office and on the way home, he stopped at a running store to buy his first pair of running shoes. He went and got on the treadmill at his apartment complex. Within 15 seconds, he lost his balance and he was on the floor, everybody was crowding around him, asking if he was okay. This was his very first run, but Martinus started blogging about his experiences as an overweight slow runner. A year and a half later, he completed the Detroit marathon, which was the first of 10 marathons that Martinus would run.

In the process, he started an online community called the Slow AF Run Club. Most recently, Martinus has published a book called *Slow AF Run Club: The Ultimate Guide for Anyone Who Wants to Run*. I read the book. It's fantastic. It literally takes you from A to Z, if you are interested in running. In this episode, we review Martinus's backstory and then we go deeper into his process of writing the book, starting his online community, the Slow AF Run Club, and selling merchandise and all the things that come with taking your platform to the next level.

If you're someone who's also thinking of taking their platform to that next level, just beyond social media posts and email lists, then you are going to love this episode. One thing that Martinus mentioned to me that I was pretty proud to hear, if I'm being honest, was that our first interview is one that he often says, contains the most detailed account of his backstory. He oftentimes recommends it to other podcasters and interviewers who want to get a thorough understanding of his background.

If you haven't heard our first interview yet on episode 90, you may want to listen to that at some point so that you get the full context to the stuff that Martinus and I are talking about in this episode. Otherwise, I'm excited to bring Martinus back onto the Light Show, so that we can continue the conversation and see where things are unfolding now. Without further ado, here is Mr. Martinus Evans, founder of the Slow AF Run Club and online community.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:05:00] LW: Martinus, welcome back to the podcast, man. It's super exciting to see you again and to see where we are today with your story and talk about some of the things you have coming out.

[0:05:10] ME: Light, it's amazing time, man. I'm so grateful to be here again.

[0:05:15] LW: Yeah. Awesome, man. Awesome. Awesome. In the last episode, we told your superhero origin story of going from basically, Men's Wearhouse to becoming a running influencer and how all that happened. In the time between that interview and now, you've been busy writing your first book, which is called *Slow AF Run Club: The Ultimate Guide for Anyone Who Wants to Run*. I want to talk a little bit about that process and obviously, talk about what's in the book. Before we get into all of that, can you just give the listeners a brief synopsis of that journey from where you started and where you are now?

[0:06:01] ME: Yeah, man. One of the things I just always like to say is that people may know me from running, but my journey of overcoming obstacles and face of adversity has always been there, man. I grew up on the East Side Detroit. Stay next to a crack house. Before the age of 10, I had two brothers pass on me. Just throughout life, there has always been adversity that I had to overcome over and over again, whether it was losing a football scholarship, getting an academic probation. To where people know me now of being a runner, influencer, or a thought leader, right?

How did I get there? We fast forward through all of this and I'm working at Men's Wearhouse. You're going to like the way you look. I guarantee it. I'm in a suit, eight to 10 hours a day. I'm in a hard bottom dress shoe. I'm walking on a carpet floor that has wrapped in concrete and I developed some hip issues. I go see an orthopedic surgeon and he tells me, "I know what's wrong with you." We have this discussion and he's like, "You're fat. You need to lose weight, or you're going to die."

Being the man that I am, you're just not going to talk to me any type of way. We had this argument, this discussion. I tell him I'm going to run a marathon. He laughs at me and tells me that's the most dumbest thing he heard in all his years of practice in medicine. Being the type of guy I am, I wanted to put hands on him, but what Michelle Obama say, when they go low, you just want to go high. Yeah, I just got up out of there.

On my way home, I bought some running shoes and got on the treadmill. Failed miserably. Couldn't run longer than 15 seconds. That was my journey. I started there, continued to go back day after day, until I got better. I eventually ran my first marathon within about 18 months of meeting that doctor, and hasn't stopped running since then. I've ran eight marathons, a hundred other different distances. Amassed this community called the Slow AF Run Club that has about 10,000 members worldwide. You may have seen me on covers on Runners World, or somewhere else.

[0:08:01] LW: On our first interview, you talked about how whenever you would weigh yourself, the scale would go to the maximum, which was 350, or something like that. You never quite knew how much you weighed. In your most recent work, you talk about how running is not necessarily a weight loss journey. What do you mean by that?

[0:08:21] ME: What I mean by that is that when it comes to running, or just physical activity in general, right, diet culture will make it feel like if you're not exercising to get rock-hard abs, or a six-pack, or packs, or whatever, whatever, your exercise and your fitness journey is futile. What you're doing does not matter if you're not going to try to attain those specific goals. My message of saying like, this is not a weight loss journey, it's just saying that there's so much benefits that comes from being regularly physically active. That why are we regulating it just to a number on the scale?

By being regularly physically active, heart rate, blood pressure, A1Cs, cholesterol, all those things that they typically blame fat people when they're like, "Oh, you need to lose weight and exercise, because you need to do all these things to get all these things done." If you exercise and not lose weight, those are mobilities or risk factors are still affected, and they're still affected in a positive way. My journey is to let people know that you should be physically active,

regardless. If you don't lose weight, it's okay, because there's still so many other benefits that comes along with it.

[0:09:39] LW: Is that something that you personally would like to experience though, the weight loss and all of that, a physical transformation? Or have you transcended that and you're just about the lifestyle?

[0:09:52] ME: I've been on that journey, man. I've been on that pony. I've lost nearly 100 pounds. I've gained it back. I've yo-yoed back and forth. I think for me, I've just transcended that on the fact of I just like being active. I like to run. I like to work out. I don't like the person I am when I am constantly looking at the scale and that be the outcome that I'm looking for. I've just transcended that.

[0:10:20] LW: What's cool about your community, you started the Slow AF, it's not called the Fat People's Run Club, or the Overweight Run Club. It's just people who don't run as, for whatever reason. You're not running as fast as the other people, because there are a whole host of issues that come with being slow when you're joining these run clubs. You had several experiences with this that have helped – that feel liked shaped your perspective in this and give you an extra layer of compassion for all runners. You said that this book is for anybody who wants to run.

I want to talk a little bit about some of those experiences. We can start wherever we can start with the San Francisco Run Club that advertised, they were open to everyone, or we can start with the philosophy of don't get on the bus, or wherever you want to start.

[0:11:05] ME: Oh, man. Well, 'Don't get on the bus' is my favorite story. It's one of the stories that my friend, Elton, still calls me today and be like, "Yo, man. I was just remembering, that dude really asked you to get on that bus." Let's talk about it. Detroit marathon, my first marathon, I went through all of the hardship of training. I did it. I get to the start line. I started to run this race. Around mile 18, things start to get a little dicey for me. The voices are starting to get to me. I've been on my feet. I'm starting to get tired.

Parts of my body that I didn't expect to hurt was hurting. I'm running a marathon, like why am I teeth hurting? I am interacting with this guy and I'm trying to give him words and

encouragement. Truthfully, it's words of encouragement that I wish somebody would just gave me. Something like, "Come on, dude. You got this. We can do this together. We got this, brother. We got this. We and this bad boy together. He in the struggle."

[0:12:02] LW: You're at your wall. You're at your wall. You're like, trying to encourage him.

[0:12:07] ME: Yeah.

[0:12:07] LW: To keep going. Because that's a way of talking to yourself.

[0:12:11] ME: Yeah. It's a way of talking to myself. I'm trying to encourage somebody else to encourage myself. He's like, "I'm done." He gets on this sag wagon, right? He gets on this bus. Mile after mile, this bus would come alongside me and be like, "Hey, big man. You want a ride to the finish line?" At first, I thought it was just a nice thing. I'm like, "No, I'm good." But mile after mile, mile 20, he came. Mile 21, he came. "Hey, big man. You want a ride to the finish line? You want to ride to the finish line?"

One of the things I started to notice was he wasn't stopping by everybody else. He wasn't pulling along to everybody else that was in front of me. He would just stop at me and be like, "Hey, man. Get on this bus." I continue to run and I get around mile 23, maybe 24. I'm struggling. I'm struggling to stay on my feet. I'm moving at a slower pace. The voices are getting to me. I got this little angel and devil on my shoulders. I call it my heart and my head. My head is like, "Yo, the pain will go away. You just get your big ass on this bus." My heart is like, "No, you got to keep going. You want to be able to get the race medal and call yourself a marathoner." I'm battling with that. Then you got this outside experience of like, "Hey, big man. Come get on the bus."

All of this comes ahead to about mile 25. I'm less than a mile away from the finish line. Then he comes again and he's like, "Come on, man. Get on this bus." I'm like, "Yo, why are you telling me to get on this bus? I'm less than a mile away. Leave me the fuck alone." He says something along the lines of, "I can't help that you're fat and slow. I'm trying to help your big ass out." What?

We have some words because you're just not going to talk to me like that. We have some words. He drives off and I finally finished the race. I think that this story here is a great metaphor for life, right? We are all going to go through some type of struggle and we're going to have our own voices that are competing against each other. Then we're also going to have the outside voices that are also going to try to compete against us as well. We have to overcome all of that in order to get to our goals.

[0:14:35] LW: The thing that comes to mind for me is when you have your alarm set on your, I don't know what Android is like, but on the iPhone, there's the alarm. When it goes off, there's this big-ass, yellow snooze button. Then the stop is really tiny at the bottom.

[0:14:51] ME: Yes.

[0:14:53] LW: It was built in so that you hit snooze, right? You have to really be intentional about stopping the alarm. I feel like, life is geared around us continually hitting snooze in one way or the other. Snooze on our potential, snooze on our goals, snooze on our dreams. Even when we're close to the finish line, it's still there. You have to be really focused on getting to that last – I think there's a Zen saying, which is 90% of the way, consider that to be halfway there, or something along those lines. Because that energy to keep going and get over the line, that last little bit is usually, it takes everything out of you. Like you said, your teeth were hurting in that moment.

In the first interview, you talked about going to the doctor for hip pain. Him basically saying, you're going to die. You saying, “F you. I’m going to run a marathon.” How long was that period of time between that conversation and that first marathon you just got through describing and what happened with the hip pain? You're still overweight. If an overweight person is hearing something like this, and we're talking morbidly overweight and they want to take control of their health, what did you learn during that process about how to train for marathon? Talk a little bit about your process there.

[0:16:10] ME: Absolutely, Light. It took about 18 months. I met the doctor of June, July of 2012. I didn't run that marathon until October 2013. There's quite a bit of time and quite a bit of stuff that can happen within 18 months, right? I leave that doctor. I started running. I still had to go to

another doctor, because I did not get what I needed from that doctor. I did not know what was going on with my health.

I found another orthopedic surgeon and he cleared me. He's like, "Everything's all right. You just need to go to physical therapy." I'm going through physical therapy and I'm running, right? I'm not running that much, right? You got to remember, my first run was 15 seconds. It ain't like I got up from 15 seconds and then bam, I'm running miles. It was literally, 30 seconds here, a minute here, so on and so forth, still building up.

During that process, I did physical therapy for about six to eight weeks while running. One of the things that they encouraged me was to run. Like, "Oh, you want to run? Good. Let's figure out how to make that happen. Let us know. Run before you come to physical therapy. Let us know how that hip is going. We're going to figure out other exercises to make sure that hip is strengthened, so you can be able to run." I found the right people that were able to help with my goals and help facilitate that, versus being like, "Nope. Lose weight, die and that's it."

I started off with a 5K. Started off with close to 5K. Took me about 10 or so weeks to do that. On the 12th week of that journey, I ran my first 5K. That was an amazing journey. It left me with a motion and feeling of like, "Holy crap. I am a runner and I can do this." Then from there, we continue to go. I continue to run more 5Ks. I signed up for a 10K. Ran a bunch of 10Ks, do a half marathon. That pretty much took care of that six months from June to December of 2012.

Now January 2013, I was talking to my wife and I was like, "Hey, I think I want to run a race. I think I'm going to run Detroit. I think it'd be a full circle moment." I'm from Detroit. I'd love to run the marathon. She was like, "Well, when is the race?" I was like, "Well, let me look it up." The registration for Detroit Marathon had opened up on that day. I signed up for the Detroit Marathon, knowing that I had about 10 or so months to train and prepare for that. Throughout that process, it was still running races, running half marathons. Then slowly start to build up doing a marathon training program.

[0:19:00] LW: What I love about your book is that it takes people literally from scratch. You don't have to know anything and you talk about picking out shoes and joining running clubs and stuff like that. Let's go back a little bit more and talk about your first journey. You went and bought

some shoes after that doctor's visit. Did you buy the right pair of shoes? Did you have to upgrade those to something else to help support your goal? What did you learn about that?

[0:19:21] ME: Oh, man. I didn't know this until later on down the line. I end up going to one of the best running shoe companies in the United States. I went to this. There's this chain called Fleet Feet Sports. That's the running shoe store that I went to. I went in there –

[0:19:37] LW: You just eyeballed, or you were just driving on the street?

[0:19:40] ME: Yeah, I'm just driving on, seeing it, went in there, didn't know nothing about it. When in there, I was like, "Y'all, I need running shoes." I'm at the wall. Imagine, I was taking it from the standpoint of like, "Oh, I'm shopping there finish line, or foot action, or one of those shoes when you're picking out a pair of Jordans." You're like, "Give me that pair right there in the Black in the size 15." They was like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. That's not how we do this here. Tell us about your goals. Tell us about this other stuff. Let me see your shoes. Let me see you walk with no shoes on. Get on this treadmill." They put me through the whole rigamarole when it comes to picking out a pair of shoes. I left there with a pair of shoes, insoles and all types of extra stuff.

[0:20:20] LW: Because they could see, okay, this guy, whatever, supinates or pronates and you need support on your arches, or your heels, or whatever like that. That could make a big difference if you're running miles and miles and miles.

[0:20:30] ME: Big difference. Right off bat, even though I didn't knew it, it was fate man. It was the universe putting me in that predicament to go to that running shoe store, see it, go there, I've never been there and them setting me up to make sure I had the best shoes that I needed for me at that particular moment.

[0:20:51] LW: Were you a part of any run clubs when you started in those 5Ks? Because 5K for Americans is like what? Three and a half miles, or something like that?

[0:20:57] ME: 3.1 miles.

[0:21:00] LW: Okay. Say, someone's inspired to start with that, where do they go? Again, this is in your book, so we're just talking about it so that they can get the book for the details.

[0:21:10] ME: There are 5Ks all over the world, all over the nation. There might be a 5K – if you listen to this, there might be a 5K in your neighborhood, or in your backyard, and you just don't know it. The first thing I always say is that A, try to find a local running shoe store in your area, get fitted right for some good shoes. But also, they will usually have the post on what races, or things just happening the community.

Since we have the Internet, we also have that great advent as well of just searching 5Ks near me. There's a website called Running in the USA that pretty much has all of the races in the United States that's happening. You can literally go to that website, put in the distance you want to run, put in what month you want to run it and put it in the location and it'll give you a running list of all the 5Ks that are in that particular criteria. That's how I find my first 5K.

[0:22:08] LW: Would they make it up against the same issues you hit up against, which is we're open to everyone, da, da, da, da, and then you run slower than everybody else and you get shamed and bullied for that. How do you avoid that?

[0:22:20] ME: You got to join the Slow AF Run Club.

[0:22:24] LW: Okay.

[0:22:27] ME: You got to join the Slow AF Run Club. That's the thing about branding, marketing, and things of that sort. A lot of places are going to like, "We're welcoming." The only way to really find out is to go. I'm not there checking off each run club, or things of that sort. However though, in the near future, I will have a solution though. The solution is we're launching a non-profit arm for the Slow AF Run Club. Once we get that non-profit arm set up, we will be allowing individuals to apply to launch their own Slow AF Run Club in their particular neighborhood, city, or wherever you have it. And there will be strict guidelines that they will have to follow if they want to use the Slow AF Run Club name and have clubs to help support people.

[0:23:15] LW: How does a run club work just in general? You meet on Saturdays, you show up at 9.00, you run for an hour and then you guys – you're in a group chat, or how does it work?

[0:23:24] ME: Yeah. It really depends, man. There's a various difference in run clubs. You have the social club that just gets together, talks about running mega for a little fun run. You have that on one side of the spectrum. Then on the other side of the spectrum, you have clubs who are people who are training to be elite runners, who want to, for example, make the Olympic trials, or that train for the Olympics as well. You have those types of clubs as well, and you have anything in between.

You can find a club that's like, "Hey, we are chill. We're running to the bar, or we're running to wherever else," and this is where we have fun and just socialize. Then, on the other side, you have people just like, "Yo, I'm going to lead the runner and I'm trying to be the best of the best."

[0:24:12] LW: Do you need a club if you're starting off, you've never done it before, do you recommend somebody joining a club?

[0:24:17] ME: As an owner of a club, my answer is yes. What I will say is that having a club, or having a community of people that gets you who've already been through the journey that you're trying to embark on, helps lower the barrier to entry into somebody's running journey. Is it necessary? Not necessarily. But do you want to go further? Do you want to expedite your learning throughout this process quicker? Then yes, you want to be a part of the club, or at least have a coach.

[0:24:53] LW: Because I feel like, on one hand, people may use that as an excuse to let themselves off the hook. Oh, there's no clubs nearby. Oh, I don't have a coach. I can't afford this, blah, blah, blah, so I'm not going to do it. I'm going to wait. But on the other hand, like you said, once you – Look, I've run before. I've never run with a club. I ran with a couple of friends. But I know that once you have some experience under your belt, if you want to take it seriously and go further, absolutely, a club, peers, coaches, and stuff can definitely take you there. Because I'm the guy that used to pick shoes based on what they look like, not on how technically it fit on my running gait and all of this stuff.

[0:25:28] ME: Exactly. That's one of the things that I would just completely agree on is that do you necessarily need it? No. Because I didn't have it. I had to learn everything the hard way myself and I think it's facing those adversities that got me where I'm at right now to be able to talk to you. For other individuals, it's really this. If you are thinking about trying to run and you don't know what to do, pick a destination. Do you have light poles that you can count on? Run from one light pole and then walk for two light poles, and to repeat. If it's not a light pole, is it a fire hydrant? Run from one fire hydrant to the next one. If it's not that, is it a car, or something else, right? Pick a small interval and do that and then slowly go a little bit further.

[0:26:18] LW: Or even a local park, where they have a little path that goes around it. You can sometimes google that and find out exactly how long that path is and then you can pace yourself. "Oh, I'm going to do half of that today, or I'm going to do a quarter of that and I'm going to work up to doing the whole path. Jogging around the whole path within a month, or a couple of months, or something like that." Just taking it gradually.

[0:26:38] ME: Right. I would say, the hard part and this is where mindset comes in is that consistency is not sexy for most people, or for the people that I train. It's more of those things that are helping them bear with themselves with the boredom of doing something consistently. Because consistency is not sexy. Doing the same thing over and over again and going a little bit further and further is not the sexiest thing, but it's the thing that's needed to be done in order to get people to their goals.

[0:27:10] LW: Talk about your experience with the runner's high, because I've experienced that and I didn't know if it was real or not, but it absolutely is real and it is addicting, when you start feeling that high. I mean, you definitely hit your wall, so you get the cramps and everything in the beginning. But then, at the end, you always have the high. What was your experience with that runner's high?

[0:27:28] ME: Oh, man. It's an amazing feeling. Better than any drug that I've ever had. I haven't had ayahuasca though. I heard that might be a trip. But going through that runner's high is one of the things that keep people going. I always tell people that the first quarter mile, the first half mile is usually the hardest because it's one of those things of like, "Oh, I don't want to do this." You're mentally in your head. Eventually, you catch flow and that's pretty much what

runner's high is, is that you are now in flow of running. Your mind is no longer talking to itself and it's literally you, your music, or listening to your heart rate, and just the music that your body makes as you're moving throughout the world.

[0:28:11] LW: I wrote a note down, because I read your book when we were supposed to do this interview a couple of weeks ago, but then we had some technical difficulties. I have all my notes. This note, I don't remember the reference for, but it says a song, Send Me, I'll Go. What is that referencing?

[0:28:26] ME: The Canton Spirituals, man. Send Me, I'll Go is a song that my mother used to play all day every day as I was growing up. In the book, I talk about you need to have that I'll go if I have to by myself mentality. That's how the song go. It's like, I'll go if I have to go by myself. It runs down a list, like whether my mother don't go, my father, my brother, my sister, if they don't go, I'll still go if I have to by myself. That's the same thing with running or anything else in life, I think that's the beautiful thing about my book, or just running in general is that it is definitely a metaphor for life.

[0:29:07] LW: That's when you're talking about with consistency, like you can't depend on your fair-weather friends saying, they're going to run with you, because a lot of times people will come up with all kinds of excuses about why they can't do it. You have to really commit for yourself to whatever your running schedule, or whatever your exercise schedule is, because I feel like it transcends just running and just about movement. It's just about movement. It's about being outside. It's about being connected to something bigger than yourself.

My interpretation is what you're running towards is your potential. That's what you're running towards. Running is just a means to that end. Because you're running away from your status quo. We all have a version of that, right? Something that we don't like about where we are in life, maybe it's our job, maybe it's our health, maybe it's our relationships, maybe it's our spiritual connection, and we want something a little bit more expansive than that. It's always going to require some degree of saying no to the status quo, and some degree of saying, "Yes, I'll go. Send me, I'll go."

[0:30:13] ME: Exactly.

[0:30:14] LW: Even if I have to go by myself. Because you're going to go by yourself. That's just the way it is.

[0:30:19] ME: Exactly, Light. There has been multiple things throughout my life. Yes, running is the thing I'm about, but learning about business, writing this book, whatever, right? There has been many times where I'll reach out to a friend and say, "Hey, I want to get into investing. I'm about to go on this journey and learn how to invest. You want to do this with me?" They're like, "I don't know." Excuses, excuses. If I just sit there and wait on them to get on board, they're going to flake out on me.

I don't want anybody in my team, or anybody that's in my circle when I'm trying to do something and then be like, "I don't know. Yada, yada, yada." It's like, "Well, screw it. I got to do this by myself then." Then I already know what's going to happen, Light, because it has happened multiple times. What's going to happen is those people are going to come back and be like, "Hey, man. Dang, I wish I would have did that with you, because I'll be right there with you, man." But instead, I'm like, "Well, you can still come on. Come on. Come on the journey. I can teach you." They're like, "No, no. I don't want to hold you back too far along."

It's always going to be people in your life that's going to have that mentality. You got to be able to go by yourself. You got to be able to go through the fire, figure out how to figure this out. Figure this life stuff out by yourself, because when it's all said and done, you're the only thing that's going to be able to get you to move forward. It's not the things that people see that counts. It's the things that when nobody sees that counts the most. That's what going, 'Send me, I'll go' by myself if I have to means to me.

[0:31:55] LW: I would even go so far as to say, 99% of people are just full of excuses. The men and women of action are so rare and usually, they're busy doing their own thing, because they're having to go by themselves down whatever path that they're on. In order to really solidify change – It's easy to start down the path, I feel like. You get the wave of motivation, it's new year's, whatever, you're like, "Okay, I'm going to do this." But when you get three, four weeks down the line and that motivation starts to wane, which it always does 100% of the time, because life gets busy, you have to understand that you're going to have to do this on your own.

What I love about what your approach is, is you do a great job of managing the expectation of hey, you don't have to run a marathon in six months. You can take a year and a half and prepare for it. You can start with a 5K. You can run slow as F, slow AF, and just take the tortoise approach, which is your icon on your club. Take the tortoise approach, as opposed to the hare approach. I love that you've incorporated all of that into your philosophy, and you're helping people find a very gradual on-ramp to whatever transformation that they ultimately want to experience.

Now something I want to ask you about, what you also mentioned in your book that I found really interesting. Again, you're coming from Men's Wearhouse. You're coming from that conversation. Guys, you have to go back and listen to the first, because you've been bullied and trolled your whole freaking life, as you said. That was just one instance in maybe a dozen ones that are just as intense, starting with being called titty boy in front of all your classmates when you were eight years old. But you would think that achieving that milestone, running your first marathon would be a moment of just a peak experience in your life. Just as you said, you're in a bathtub crying and depressed after that. Talk about that. What was that about?

[0:34:02] ME: That experience is by far the amazing experience and the heart experience to go through at the same time. It's the notion of putting so much into this one go, not necessarily know you're going to make it and you do it and then you look up, and you're like, "I don't have anything else to look forward to." That's what it was for me. The doctor called me fat and then I took 18 months of my life of like, "I'm going to prove this doctor wrong. I'm going to run this marathon." That's the only thing that my sites were set on. Then do it and get sad and depressed.

Going through therapy, one of the things that I found out is that most professional athletes, people or Olympic athletes, they have the same thing happening. They do all this training to get to the Olympics, they win the gold medal and they get sad and depressed because there's nothing else in their eyes to look forward to. They did the pinnacle. The same happened to me in my own, Light, is that I didn't have nothing else to look forward to. I spent all this time doing this, thinking about this, trying to figure out how to get better, thinking about what I'm going to do once this happened, like am I going to write a letter to a doctor? Am I going throw the medal at

him? All this stuff. Then when it was all said and done, I'm in the bathtub crying. Thinking to myself like, "This shit is over."

[0:35:27] LW: In hindsight now, thinking back on the book, do you have done differently?

[0:35:30] ME: In hindsight, and I talk about this in the book is you need three things in your life. You need values. Values is like a compass. It tells you the direction, but it does not give you a destination. You need goals. Goals are the destination. Then you need habits. Habits are the little small steps along the way that helps you get to your goals. When you think about that, when you add all three of those together, you have this trifecta of like, you have your values as this unattainable thing.

You want to be a good father. There's not one thing that you can do that you can check off and be like, "Yeah. Good father." It's a combination of all of these things. Then people don't necessarily tell you about this, until you did. Like, "Dang, Light was a good father, right? He really supported them kids. Little Johnny acted up and set him straight." It's these actions that you do that culminates to that specific title. Then you have your goals, right? The cool thing about values is that you can have as many goals as possible.

I was focused mainly on that one particular goal and not backing out and looking at, well, what is my value? What do I have value in running? What about running? What about this journey that I really love and not thinking about that one doctor's experience? That's where I came up with this mission for me is first, it was I just want to run and be happy and I'm going to run regardless of whatever, whatever. I just want to be able to be physically active. That has transcended as well to, I want to be able to inspire one million people to start running with my journey.

Now, yes, that's a huge unattainable thing. I don't know if I'll ever be able to accomplish that in my given life, but that's something that I can go to. It could be that driving force to say, "Okay, the things that I'm doing needs to be able to go towards those particular things."

[0:37:30] LW: What did you notice about your health? How did your health change? How did your lifestyle choices change? I don't know if you were drinking or not before then, but did that

affect that part of your life, food choices, anything like that? Was running a key domino in those ways?

[0:37:45] ME: More or less. We can talk about it. I lost some weight. I lost weight. Like I said, during that first bout, I lost about close to 90 pounds. Then I gained it back and things of that sort and went back and forth. But I think, one of the things that really changed throughout my life was mostly everything I did was in the light of I'm doing this to be a better athlete. If I'm training for a particular marathon, my friends going out on Saturday, want to hang out, I got to run 20 miles, which means I got to be up at 5 a.m. Which means, I can't be drinking with y'all, because when I wake up, my body ain't processed all that alcohol. Now I'm on the road.

Really understanding like, is the pain of not participating with my friends, or hanging out worse than the pain of what the consequence is in the next day. Those are one of the things that I'm typically weighing out.

[0:38:44] LW: I heard someone say the other day like, he has a six-pack. He said, the six-pack is the story of all the pancakes I didn't eat. That's what it means. I like pancakes as much as anyone else, but I like the idea of having a six-pack more than I like the idea of the taste of whatever the thing is that I had declined to eat, which is just a metaphor for there's always a sacrifice. Whatever you want, you're going to have to sacrifice something. You say you can have anything, but you can't have everything.

[0:39:13] ME: Exactly.

[0:39:15] LW: You get to choose.

[0:39:16] ME: Yeah.

[0:39:17] LW: You get to choose. Talk about your transition from Men's Wearhouse. You're starting to run, you're taking it seriously, and you become this influencer, maybe even before that was a thing in running, which obviously, that seems like a dream type of position, if you can make a living doing the thing that you love to do. How did you know it was time to transition

away? What were some of those moments where you're like, "Okay, this is it"? Or, did you have to take a big leap of faith quitting that job to start doing other things?

[0:39:53] ME: There was a bunch of other things that happened in the midst of that. Yeah, I started this blog, started writing and things of that sort. I also started to go to grad school. I got my master's degree. I think it was the summer where my advisor was like, "Hey, I know you're working at Men's Wearhouse, but you really need to apply yourself here at school." I'm like, "Well, I got to make money." She was like, "Well, I can get you a fellowship."

That opportunity of, do I want to focus more in school and have more time to focus in on blogging more and running more, or do I want to continue to be at Men's Wearhouse? To me, the answer was right there. It was easy. I'm going to go to school. I'm going to learn more. I'm going to have more time and I'm going to run and blog more, and that's what I end up doing.

Throughout that, thinking about that journey, I didn't necessarily go full-time influencer until about years later. I've had multiple jobs. I've lived in different states and things of that sort, and did it pseudo-part-time of being this influencer, but still having a full-time job along the way. It wasn't until I want to say, within the last three years that I've had it where I'm able to do it full-time. That was a huge leap of faith. I had this job and I'm working there and I recently had just started there. I'm still running. They know I'm an influencer. I'm doing marketing for them and I run this marathon, run a New York City Marathon.

Before I go to New York City, Adidas reached out to me and it's like, "Hey, we want to fly you to Portugal to do this campaign. Are you down?" I talked to my boss and I'm like, "Hey, I'm going to Portugal, so I'm going to need a two-week vacation, or a two-week time off, two-week PTO." She's like, "Okay. Go do your thing. Yada, yada, yada." Get to Portugal. I was only supposed to be there for a couple days to do a little cameo.

First, they come, I showed up and showed out and I can see people whispering in the background. My handler comes to me and it's like, "Hey, they love you on camera and they want to expand your role. Can you stay the whole week?" I'm calling back to my job and like, "Hey, I know it's been two weeks, but I'm going to need some extra time." She's like, "Go. Go do your thing. You're in Portugal. Enjoy."

After we can get done with that shoot, we're wrapping up, my handler there comes again and it's like, "Hey, there's another crew filming in Acropolis, I think it was called. Athens. Greece. They love what you're doing. Can you go there?"

[0:42:29] LW: What were you doing that they love so much? You just being ham on the camera, or what did you do?

[0:42:35] ME: Yeah. I was just a man, you know what I'm saying? Yeah, just being a ham though, like personality, where other people are shying away from the camera, I'm giving personality. I'm giving wild gestures, because I know, this is my moment. I'm in front of the dealers. This can really change my life. I show up and show out. I give them the best performance of Martinus that they can never get.

[0:43:02] LW: This is after you shot the nudes on Instagram of yourself.

[0:43:05] ME: No. Before that.

[0:43:06] LW: Okay. Okay. Beautiful. Were you even paid for this?

[0:43:10] ME: Yeah, I was paid. I was paid for it. Not much, but I was paid. If I would have went to wake the fire, we got paid more. But I go to Greece and I'm there in Greece and them as well. Promised it was only going to be two days, yada, yada, yada. Get to Greece, it rains for those two days, so we can't even do the shoot. I'm calling my boss again. It's like, three weeks. It ended being three and a half weeks. Maybe even four weeks. I think it was almost a month, because I came back and I was jet-lagged. I was like, "Yeah, I'm sorry, but I need more time." Let's call it a month.

I've only been at this job for less than three months. My boss comes to me and was like, "Hey, we need to talk. I know you may not see it for yourself but I see for you what's to come. We're going to go part-time. You can go part-time. We're not going to make you a full-time employee." We do that and then started working with it. Did get some more and end up getting this Adidas contract. During the same weekend, my book contract comes through as well. I'm talking to my

boss and I'm like, "Yeah, got the stuff. Yada, yada, yada. Adidas said they want to bring me on. I got my book stuff, but I haven't got paid for any of this stuff."

She's like, "I'm going to stop you. Go bet on yourself. Consider this your one-month notice."

She's like, "This is your one-month notice. Don't come to work. We're going to pay you for that next month, but I think you need time to figure this out." This is her pushing me off the nest, like pushing me off the nest. The month comes, I'm working on a book, but I haven't got my first check yet. This Adidas contract didn't come through yet. I'm literally panicking the last week of this month. I'm talking to my wife and being like, "Hey, this money ain't came in yet. Maybe I should email the boss and like, "Hey, I'm sorry. I'm dumb. Take me back."

I opened the email to send her an email to say all of this and my Adidas contract was there. I guess, this is a universe telling me that this is it. That was about three or so years ago. I worked with Adidas for about two years. Did this, wrote the book. Then as of recently, I'm no longer with Adidas. You could thank Kanye for that. But it was an amazing journey and I hadn't went back right. I think I've been fortunate enough and had the hustle enough within that time to create other flows of income for me, so I don't necessarily have to go back to a job.

[0:45:58] LW: What year did you start The Mighty Network?

[0:46:00] ME: 2018.

[0:46:01] LW: Okay. That's been around for about five years. I started one in 2020. When I register – Mighty Networks is a platform, it's like a Facebook group, you can run courses and stuff and it's a way to bring your community together online. Not sponsored by them, or anything like that. I've been using them for a few years now. What was interesting is when I signed up, I didn't know anything about you. This is how I found out about you, by the way. Slow AF was the gold standard. They were like, "If you're setting it up, you want to set it up like these guys set it up."

Then I went in and looked at all of the welcoming protocols that you guys had already set up and I was like, "Oh, wow. This is really, really good stuff." We ended up loosely borrowing a lot of your language.

[0:46:47] ME: Don't worry. A lot of people usually borrow our –

[0:46:49] LW: Online community. But it was very well organized. I'm just curious. Take us through how the genesis of this, how did you pick Mighty Networks? How did you know how to set it up so thoroughly? Who helped you with that? Just talk a little bit about that process.

[0:47:08] ME: I found out about Mighty Networks when I was in California working at a gym, man. I was working at a gym and I was talking to one of the clients and I was telling my story and they was like, "Yo, you should start a Mighty Network?" I'm like, "What's this?" Then, I wasn't necessarily interested in it, because I'm like, people have always tried to sell me stuff, and I'm like, "No. I don't want it. Yada, yada, yada."

Just so happen, I felt our phones are listening to us. I get a video, a YouTube video suggestion of somebody showing me their Mighty Networks. I think it was maybe Yoga with Adrienne. I seen her stuff and just the possibilities of like, "Oh, this is how we run our courses, where we got all this community," and it hit me. All the things that I've been trying to do, I had a Facebook group, it failed. I tried to run courses, it failed and I just felt like I was swimming. The best of having too much to do amongst all of these things and keep my day job.

When I found out about Mighty and I was skeptical and I seen that video, I was like, "Oh, I see the light now." I've seen the light. Just like you, I went through a lot of other people, communities as well to try to figure out what's the best for me. But one of the things that I took the approach of is I want this thing to be a party. When I was an undergrad, we used to throw amazing parties. Ragers. That's how I thought about my Mighty Network was I want this thing to be a party, and I want people to feel like, yo, you want to be a part of this. Then I want people to be a part of this and then go out to the world, it would be like, "Yo, you missed that party Martinus threw. You need to be at the next one."

That was the, more or less the approach I took. Then understanding my population and the people I've worked with on the Internet, sometimes you got to like, I don't want to say dumb it down, but you got to give them the breadcrumbs. You got to leave them in the things that you want them to do. That's why my stuff is a little bit more thorough than somebody else's, because

I understand that it's a new platform, somebody might not necessarily get it and then they get there and be like, "I don't know what to do. This is dumb. I quit."

That's the same thing with a party, right? You come to a party and you get there, you don't know nobody, nobody's welcoming you, you don't know who to say hi to. You're like, "Man, this party whack. I'm gone." But for me, my parties I'm like, no, we got people at the door welcoming you, "Yo, what you doing? Who you work with? What you're doing? Let me try to link you up with somebody, yada, yada, yada." That's the same approach I take with my communities as well.

[0:49:47] LW: Did you set it up yourself, or did you have help?

[0:49:50] ME: I set it up myself.

[0:49:51] LW: How long did all that take?

[0:49:52] ME: Four months.

[0:49:54] LW: How did you get 10,000 members? Talk about that process of did you run ads, or did you just –

[0:49:59] ME: Oh, no.

[0:50:00] LW: - blog about it?

[0:50:01] ME: Everything I got was organic traffic, man. A couple of things worked in my favor. One was the pandemic. When the pandemic happened, a lot of runners, races got canceled. They were sad, depressed, not necessarily knowing what to do. The same was happening inside the Slow AF Run Club. I started running these virtual races, man, and was getting 4,000 people around the Internet to participate in this race.

I won't call myself a marketing genius, but I'm a marketing genius. Everything that I do is Slow AF everything. Slow AF over everything. When people start to run those races, I just continued to funnel them to the Slow AF Run Club. "Hey, if you want these bonuses, you got to go inside

the club. You got to go in here. You got to go in there.” That helped me out. Then the outside press got wind of it.

New York Times reached out. They did a little profile on it. Got on the cover of Runners World. That helped out as well. I think, this is a thing, like all of that momentum is where 10,000 followers, or 10,000 people inside the community come. I haven't ran not one ad directly to the Slow AF Run Club. I only run ads to things that it's timely and I know that I'm going to get money from right then and there. For example, my virtual races. I ran ads to that, because \$45 a pop, it's got 4,000 people, you can do the math on that. I was like, well, I'm just going to continue to do this. I will run tons of virtual races throughout the pandemic. Sometimes three or four virtual races at once with various different medals and designs and all of it was Slow AF Run Club presents this race.

[0:51:51] LW: For people listening to this who have been thinking about starting a community, what are some of the learnings that you acquired over the years of – now, you have people in the community, fine, but now what? How do you nurture them? How do you keep them engaged? How do you retain them?

[0:52:08] ME: My best advice for this is like a party. You got to keep people entertained. What do you want them to do? What do you want them to do inside your community? Do you want them to talk? Do you want them to engage? Do you want them to just be lurkers? You need to have that goal in mind. Just like for your party event, do you want to have a rager? All right, if you want to have a rager, do you got a banging DJ, or a playlist, or at least an alcohol to help loosen people up? Same thing with communities, right? Do you want people talking? Are you talking? Are you providing prompts and questions that people can answer questions on, right? Do you have other people in there who are also social elixirs to also participate inside that community as well?

A lot of people think that having a community is going to run itself and you don't have to do nothing. I wouldn't say all of that. What I would say is that running the community is work, is hard work. But once you get it up and running to where you want it to be, it can potentially run this itself, but you got to do a lot of frontend work to make sure that that community runs that way, in order for you to slowly back up. Just like a party. You get there and there's only two, or

three people there, all right, how am I going to make this the best party ever for these two or three people?

[0:53:28] LW: In the early days of the club, you were in there all day, every day.

[0:53:33] ME: All day, every day. Answering comments.

[0:53:36] LW: Responding.

[0:53:37] ME: Commented on everything. My motto was never miss a handshake.

[0:53:43] LW: How do you know how to get help, when to get help and who to select for that help?

[0:53:48] ME: I will say, the first place to look for help is within the community. There's always super users, or individuals who are using this thing almost more than you inside the community. That's who I tag first and reach out to them and say like, "Hey, would you be a moderator? I can't pay you, but I would love for you to be a part of this. Be a monster community. Let's make this better." I initially started there. I have five moderators that I didn't pay, because I couldn't afford them, but they loved it so much and they loved the mission so much that they went even harder than I could. They're commenting, they asking questions, they're up in there more than I am.

Then at that point, I'm like, "All right, I can ease back a little bit and continue to work on the community, versus in the community." I would say, that's the first thing. Look for people, or members inside the community. There's always some type of super user, or somebody who supports what you're doing and just ask them. "Hey, can you be a part of this? I can get you a t-shirt, or whatever, whatever, but can you be a part of this? I want to know more about how we can get you more into this thing. I want you to figure out, or I want you to be empowered to help me with what are the things that I need to improve inside this thing, so I can actually do it."

That's what I used to do with my moderators. Every two weeks, we would meet and they would tell me what's going on. "Hey, Martinus. A lot of people are asking about this." They'll agree like, "Yeah, that's a great idea. You should do that." Then what I do, okay, let me go do it.

[0:55:29] LW: What's your role now in the community? How involved are you?

[0:55:33] ME: I'm involved.

[0:55:38] LW: You're going full days without going in there? I'm asking from my own experience, because I go in and out, man. It's like, it's so much work that I just can't be in there some days, because I got other stuff going on. But I do recognize the importance of you still have to show face and you still have to get in there as much as you possibly can.

[0:56:02] ME: I would say this. It would appear that I'm in there every day.

[0:56:07] LW: Okay. You have people on your behalf in there.

[0:56:11] ME: But am I in there every day? Absolutely not. It would appear then –

[0:56:16] LW: You put in the time. You put in the time. You put in a couple of years of being in there all the time.

[0:56:21] ME: One of the things that I do, even for my content-wise, I do a lot of batch days. This is something that I recommend everybody do, it's batch day. Me and my team we get together and we plan out two, almost three months' worth of content. I'll take a day and just record that stuff. For my Instagram, I got two Instagrams. I got the Slow AF Run Club Instagram and 300 Pounds and Running Instagram. I take a day and I record 40 pieces of content. They schedule it. They'll respond to comments of like, "You're amazing. Blah, blah, blah." But if they need help on a specific comment of somebody's asking this specific thing. Martinus, this is the comment you need to jump in on, I'll jump in. If there's comments like, "Hey, good job." They'll thumbs up at it, or just say, thanks. They'll schedule all the other posts for me.

I just take that day, I schedule those 40 pieces of content, or not even schedule, but create those 40 pieces of content and I don't have to think about it for another month and a half, or two months. The same thing is with the run club. We plan that stuff out. I have what I call a journey of a runner, like the customer base of what I want them to go through and we recycle that every three or so months.

[0:57:40] LW: Let's talk about that. Let's talk about assistance and team members. What have you learned about choosing someone who would be good to work with you? Because I'm sure you've had a bunch of trial and error, people that didn't work out. What did you figure out about that?

[0:57:53] ME: Some of the things that I figured out about this is that for some of these assistants, they'll do whatever you tell them to do, but you have to tell them what to do.

[0:58:03] LW: They're not going to be in there guessing and being self-starting.

[0:58:09] ME: What I find out is those are the types of people I don't like to work with.

[0:58:13] LW: The people who just do what you tell them to do and nothing more, nothing less?

[0:58:17] ME: Yeah. Those are not the type of people that I like to work with. I need self-starters. I need people who have brains and ideas and who are willing to challenge my thoughts as assistants. I don't need people that's like, "Okay, you want me to do what? All right. I'm going to do that. Hey, Martinus. I'm done. Is there anything else?" No. I give them the authority to say like, "Hey, here's the budget and here's the extra budget." Come to me with stuff. If you can't come to me with stuff, I can go train anybody else to go do that one particular thing that you're doing. I won't say that doesn't make you valuable to me, but it's hard when I'm this entrepreneur, I'm an author, I'm doing all this other stuff, I can't sit down and give you the time to be like, "All right, but also what you like to do, whatever the skills that you got."

I need people who are on my team that can think, quick on their feet and also come to me and say, "Hey, Martinus." For example, I have an assistant and she's like, "Hey, Martinus. I see that sometimes your emails, they get backed up, or I know you get busy, so you don't check them as

much. How about this? How about I put in this process, where I'll check all your emails and every day, I'll give you a word doc of all the emails, the people have said and with the responses that I think you should tell them and you can just go and check it.”

[0:59:35] LW: I love that.

[0:59:36] ME: That's amazing. That's amazing. Those are the types of people that I necessarily need, because I just don't have the time to sit and ponder and be like, “Hmm. All right, Susie. What else should we give you? I need something like, “No, Martinus. I know you got the hours. I know you got the budget. This is what I think I should be doing.” If it makes sense, do it. Okay.

[0:59:59] LW: That's exactly what I've discovered, too. There's basically two kinds of assistants. I call them, they're worker bees. Those are people who just do exactly what you tell them to do, nothing more, nothing less and there are problem solvers, which is what you were talking about.

[1:00:11] ME: Yes.

[1:00:12] LW: Person looks at your email, notices a problem and solves it, and gives you the solution. They're oriented towards, how can I free up more time for Martinus? How can I help him do what he does the best, which is envision things, create things, implement things and then I can just be the support for that. Instead of having him stop his train of thought to think about how I can solve this problem and then tell me exactly how to do it from A to Z.

[1:00:39] ME: Because that's usually like, when you're dealing with newer assistants, or when you're first getting started out, that's usually what it is. “All right, we're going to do 10 hours a week, cool. What do you want me to do?” Fuck. I got to pay you and tell you what to do? Damn. Versus somebody that comes in, understands the system more and then be able to figure out the problems that you're having. Those are the types of people that I love to work with and support and courage for them as well, is that if I win – this is how I try to tell people, you are on the bottom floor of the next Tony Robbins, the next Les Brown, the next Eric Thomas. I'm there. In my head, I'm already there.

I may not have caught up money-wise, but that's where I'm going. You're at the bottom level with me. If you stick around and if we can make this work, just imagine where we at five years from now when I'm actually that and you're there. I'm going to show most loyalty to you.

[1:01:40] LW: For the listener who agrees with this and says, "Okay, I want someone who's a problem solver," well, how do you bet for a problem solver? Do you have to hire them first? Is there a way to figure it out before you hire them?

[1:01:51] ME: You got to get problem-solving questions. For example, this is how I found my best social media manager, and I found this from when I used to work for Yelp. At Yelp, when I applied for Yelp as one of the social media people, one of the things they asked you to do is give you scenarios of questions you need to answer that you might need to answer on social media. For example, if you're looking for a social media answer, comment to this post, or write a caption for this picture. I just give them a picture. Write a caption for it. Give me your best caption.

A customer sends this DM, what is the things that you're going to do to make sure that this gets situated? You start asking situational questions. You can start to figure out who are the problem solvers and who are the people who are not problem solvers writing the answers. That is blatant. You give me a caption for this picture and they give you some basic inspirational stuff, or a quote. You're like, "No, that's not what I was looking for." Gone. Versus somebody that's like, oh. The person I got now, she's like, "Oh, I looked at some of your other posts. I noticed that you go deep in the spectrum. This is the inspector post that I think you were right." I'm like, "Out of here. You won."

That's all I would say is that you have to give them situational questions of things that you're going through and the things that you're struggling through and see how they answer them. Based off those answers, you'll know if that person is a problem solver or a worker bee.

[1:03:35] LW: I've done something similar, too. It's also helpful to see how quickly they can come up with that solution, because some people are problem solvers, but it takes them three times longer than it would take someone else to come up with that same solution. You have to monitor the timing as well. What I've done in the past was I put together say, 10 questions and I

say, you only have five hours to come up with solutions for these 10 questions. You're not going to be able to finish all with them. It's a way for me to see what they do best, because they're all different skill sets. Each one of those questions addresses a different skill set, so I love that. Love that solution.

[1:04:10] ME: That and then with the advent of ChatGPT, I think one of the things that people fail to realize is that, "Shit, I still don't have time." Understanding prompts and prompt engineering still takes a lot of time. When ChatGPT2 came out, the person who runs my social media, she's like, "Hey, I'm swinging around with it and figuring out this prompt stuff. This is a course I want to buy." I'm like, "Great. Here. Here's the money for the course."

That comes to the problem-solving. Now she's like, "Hey, just want to let you know, using ChatGPT on some of these comments, or some of these captions, let me know what you think, but I'm still training to make sure it sounds like your voice." That's still a thing where you still have a representative who's doing the thing for you, because you still don't have the time, and it's quicker. Then, they're then able to do other things that maybe on the list that you couldn't get to, because they're spending time doing some of that manual brain thinking labor type of thing.

[1:05:20] LW: Let's talk about the process of the book. Conventionally speaking, people will get an agent. They'll write a proposal. The agent will shop the proposal to publishers. You'll find the publishers will bid for opportunity to publish your book, give you an advance, blah, blah, blah. Did you go down that traditional path? Or was your path a bit different?

[1:05:42] ME: More or less the same path. It's just certain things came out in various different ways. For example, my agent. Most people, they have to have a writing assignment, or a writing sample and then send it to and shop agents. I found this agent from a friend of a friend. I had a friend that was writing his book and she was like, "Hey, I'm going to give you X amount of dollars to write the foreword for it." I was like, "All right." I was thinking in my head, like I would've just did it for the love, but if you're going to pay me, cool.

Then it came out that they didn't have the budget that they thought had for it. She was like, "I'm indebted to you. Whatever favor you need, just let me know." I was like, "I need access. Introduce me to your editors, agents, whatever, whatever." She was like, "You know what? I

have an agent for you. I worked with her in the past. She didn't work out for me, but it was because some other things. I don't want you to think she's a bad agent. She's an amazing agent, but I think she'll be the agent for you.”

I met with her. Did not meet any other agents. Talked to her current clients and we've been in love land. From that point on, yes, wrote a book proposal. Typically, your agents might have other proposals from other authors that they've worked with that you can use, did that. Then I would say, that's the beautiful part of the agent is that on my particular agent was she was an editor at some of the big five, big four, I don't know how many big it is. They keep changing it, right? But she was an editor at some of these bigger publishing companies, so she had ins.

Yeah. They bid it. There was a bidding war. Then I ended up getting a book deal. All of this happened within – the longest thing was me writing a proposal. From the point of when my agent put the book proposal out there and bidding, and when I got a book deal were days.

[1:07:33] LW: Beautiful. Just a little bit about your process of writing, because this is your first book. How many words it was in your contract?

[1:07:40] ME: 75,000. Between 75,000 and 80,000 words.

[1:07:43] LW: That's about what? A 300-page, 350?

[1:07:46] ME: Yeah. Somewhere around there. I think it ended up being around 256 when it was all set and done.

[1:07:52] LW: But you got to write probably a hundred-something thousand in order to get it to 75,000. How did you decide to approach that? Why did you decide to write a book about the process of running, as opposed to just say, a memoir, or just telling your story?

[1:08:08] ME: I had a heart-to-heart with my agent. She's the author whisperer as I like to call it. She was like, “Martinus, I know you want to write this memoir and I think you should write a memoir. I just don't think now it's the time to write a memoir.” She's like, “Here's why. The world don't know you like that. You don't have a big-time name. People don't know you like David

Goggins. You don't have the connections of big friends of Tony Robbins, or all these other famous people that you can ride on the coattails of. What I think you should do is write a how-to manual and really get a foothold in the realm of running. You can add some motivational stuff that you might want to add to it, but if you go that route, I promise you, it's going to be a lot more rewarding than you doing a memoir, no one knows you and then it flops. Then from there, nobody wants to touch you.”

I really listened to it and she's like, “It's your choice, but this is what I really think for you.” I had a conversation. I did my own research. I started looking at running books and things of that sort and what was out there. When it was all said and done, I was like, “Damn, she's right.” There hasn't been a new how-to running manual in a while. I can add my own perspective on it and there's still be time for a memoir. When I think about this year when my book came out, there has been four running memoirs that has all came out this year. Four or five of them.

I can imagine trying to fight with them, like these other individuals who are elite Olympians who've put out their memoirs. With the pandemic, everybody's stuff has all come out at the same time. Now, all of these memoirs have come out on running and I could imagine that if I went that memoir out, I'll be competing with some of these elite athletes who told their story. Versus now, it's a how-to manual with some memoir-esque elements to it, people get what they need from it, but they also see how much more I can do.

[1:10:14] LW: And as you were writing, who do you have in mind as the audience?

[1:10:19] ME: The Martinus that started running when he was in 2012. I wrote the book that I wish I would have when I first got started running.

[1:10:27] LW: What did you find surprisingly difficult about writing and maybe surprisingly easy?

[1:10:33] ME: What I found surprisingly difficult was the editing process. Editing your own words. For most people who aren't writers, you try to edit and write at the same time. That was one of my biggest downfalls. I think, what was easy, or easier was the process that I've created for myself to start writing. Very methodical guy. I did the math. All right 75,000 words. I got 18 months to write this thing. All right, let's really break this down.

I'll probably write anywhere between three or four times a week. How many words do I actually need to write and this amount of time to actually get to 75,000 words? When I did the math, it came to about 192. 192 words that I had to write a day. For over 192 words for three to four days a week, I would get to 80,000 words or 75,000 words. I thought to myself, all right, let's do that. Knowing that, 192 words is three or four sentences. If I sat down and just did that and set my timer for two to three hours and to sit there and just write consistently, I would some days have 4,000 words, some days I banged out a whole chapter. Some days I didn't. But it was the consistency part of it.

Then one of the things that I also did was disconnect my laptop from the Internet, so that I can't go surf anywhere. I told myself, I just got to keep writing, or I just got to keep typing. When I didn't have words to say, I'll literally write, "This is dumb." Imagine me in a computer, like not necessarily know what you're going to say and it's literally, "This is dumb. This is dumb. This is dumb." Eventually, it's like, don't get off the bus. Remember when the bus driver told me to get on this bus, yada, yada, yada. Then I can't think of that now, so then it's like, "This is dumb. This is dumb." Then I go back to thinking about that story of like, all right, how can I span this out? Then I'll write a little bit more on that and then I'll run out of thoughts and then I'll just go back to this is dumb. At the end of the day, I'll select all, find this is dumb, delete and then I'll have a whole draft for that particular day.

[1:12:49] LW: I've also found that sometimes just going through my camera roll can help to trigger certain memories, or events. But I love the this is dumb approach and then deleting it all and then you're just left with what you have. Is there a coffee shop out there where they saw you in there, you working on your computer, nobody really knew what you were doing and you wrote a significant part of your book?

[1:13:12] ME: Not necessarily, man. I did everything in my home office.

[1:13:15] LW: Okay. Stay focused.

[1:13:16] ME: Yeah. I did everything in the home office. Another thing that I did that I don't think most authors know to do is like, I hired my own editor. I took some of my money, I found the

outside editor. Before I sent my draft to the publisher, I had that initial editor go through it. We will workshop it together. I had our own retainer and we would workshop it together every two-three weeks. I'll send her everything I had for those two weeks span. She will edit it and then she'll sit down with me and be like, "Hey, this is great, but I think you need to do this. Or like, you know what I was looking for for this book, or for this chapter, but you didn't tell me, it was X, Y, and Z. You left me flying in the air."

One of the things she always tell me is that, "Martinus, you need to land the plane, man. You tell these amazing stories, but you're not landing the plane, man. You got to bring me back down with a conclusion, or something." Being able to go through that process made the other process of sending it to the publisher and going through all of the edits with the publisher a whole lot easier.

[1:14:21] LW: Well, I think this is a good place to end it. Thank you so much for sharing your process. I know a lot of times, we don't talk as much about our process. It's just like, highlight, highlight. Oh, I got a book. Oh, I got a community, but nobody really knows how it all came together. This conversation for me is very special to hear behind the scenes of how these things came together, because I think it's so relatable and that people out there who may have some ideas, or may have a small community can now have some next steps in their mind on how to grow that into something a little bit more substantial.

The book comes out June 6th, 2023. Definitely go out and check that out, especially if you have any interest in moving your body, coming off the couch. It's written for people who are on the couch, who want to come off the couch and start doing something. Takes you through the whole process, A and Z. Then I guess, next steps would also be to check out the Slow AF Run Club community online and follow you on social media. What else you got going on, man? You got an album coming out? What else is going on?

[1:15:30] ME: I got a 25-city book tour.

[1:15:33] LW: No way.

[1:15:34] ME: Yeah, man. 25 cities, man.

[1:15:35] **LW:** That's huge. That's a lot of work.

[1:15:37] **ME:** Yes. I planned that myself. I got 25-city book tour that I planned myself. We got that going on. Then I'm working on a non-profit, The Slow AF Run Club Foundation, and that's something that we're working on as well.

[1:15:50] **LW:** Where does the book tour kick-off?

[1:15:51] **ME:** New York City, June 5th. Then June 6th, I'm going to be at Good Morning America. Then from there, Poughkeepsie, New York.

[1:16:00] **LW:** When are you in LA?

[1:16:02] **ME:** I don't think I'm in LA yet. I haven't found a place in LA yet.

[1:16:05] **LW:** Okay. Are you still looking for venues?

[1:16:07] **ME:** Absolutely.

[1:16:08] **LW:** Okay, so if someone has a venue, what email do they reach out to you?

[1:16:11] **ME:** They hit me at hello@slowafunclub.com. Slowafunclub.com.

[1:16:19] **LW:** What's your ideal venue?

[1:16:20] **ME:** I would love a venue that we can bring runners to. Somewhere that's accessible to a trail, or somewhere that we can meet, go for a run and then come on back and do the speaking component of it.

[1:16:34] **LW:** Okay. It doesn't have to necessarily be Black-owned, or anything like that? Just someplace close to a trail? I mean, ideally if it's minority, oh, that's interesting.

[1:16:42] ME: If it's Black-owned, that would be extra –

[1:16:46] LW: But it's not a deal breaker? It's not. Cool. Awesome, man. Well, congratulations on everything you're doing. We still have a met in person. Hopefully, that will happen soon as well at some point.

[1:16:56] ME: Yeah. We got to make it happen.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[1:16:59] LW: Thank you so much for listening to my interview with Martinus Evans. For more information, you can follow Martinus on the socials. He is at @300poundsandrinning on Instagram. His book, *Slow AF Run Club*, is now available everywhere books are sold. Of course, I'll put links to everything else that Martinus and I discussed in the show notes on my website, lightwatkins.com/show.

If this is your first time listening to the Light Watkins Show, we've got an incredible archive of interviews with other luminaries, who share how they found their path and their purpose. You can search these interviews by subject matter, if you only want to hear episodes about people who've taken leaps of faith, or who've overcome financial struggles, or who've navigated health challenges. You can get a list of all of those at lightwatkins.com/show.

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In any case, thank you very much for that. I hopefully will see you back here next week with another story about someone just like me and you, who took a leap of faith in the direction of their purpose. Until then, keep trusting your intuition, keep following your heart, and keep taking those leaps of faith. If no one's told you recently that they believe in you, I believe in you. Thank you and have a great day.

[END]